

COLD SHOULDER

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A clean, but plain man (RYAN HOUSTON) is packing a small bag. He is on his cell phone talking to some one on the other end while the credits roll.

RYAN

Hello? (beat) Just packing up, I've everything laid out. (beat) It's called Myrtle Grove Manor, but I doubt it's truly haunted - Drew just thought it would help spark inspiration. (beat) Oh no Dad, I've plenty of time to finish the novel, but you know I've always been one to complete my works early. (beat) Of course. (beat) Yes, tell Mom I said hello, and I'll be back at home in a week. (beat) Okay, take care.

As the phone call ends, the last of his things are packed. The sound of a zip cuts to black, then shows our title, "COLD SHOULDER".

INT. CAR, LONG DRIVE - DAY

Ryan, overdressed and over "made-up" for the drive, is driving solo on the road. He picks up his tape recorder and begins to speak to it.

RYAN

This is day one of the new novel - its March 2nd, 2012, and I'm on my way to the Myrtle Grove Manor where I'll be for a week. I'm using this bed and breakfast as inspiration, as the owners claim it to be haunted. When I arrive, I hope my imagination helps me write, because I don't believe a word of it.

He presses stop on the top of the tape player. The drive continues.

EXT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR GROUNDS - EVENING

Ryan arrives on the manor premises. The house is not as he expected. It's mostly new looking with feature unlike any plantation home. He shakes his head as he looks at it though his window. He exits his vehicle, stretches his legs, then

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reaches back in the vehicle to grab his tape recorder. He begins to talk to it while he walks through the yard.

RYAN

(to the tape recorder)

Well, I've arrived to the "haunted site". It's... not very haunted looking if I'm being honest.

A man speaks up from around the corner, behind Ryan.

GORDY

We have Katrina to thank for that.

Ryan turns around, startled.

GORDY

Welcome. I'm Gordy Lebeau. I'm the groundskeeper. Katrina nearly wiped this place out - had to replace a lot of the original wood with the crap wood from the big hardware stores.

Ryan approaches him and shakes his hand.

RYAN

Hi. I'm Ryan Houston. I'll be staying here for a week.

GORDY

You don't sound too excited. Most people who come here come for the excitement of it all.

RYAN

My brother paid for it, hoping to inspire me.

GORDY

You must be a writer.

RYAN

Ah, you've heard of me.

GORDY

No, its just many writers come here for inspiration. I hope you include me in the special thanks if things work out for you here.

RYAN  
(sarcasm)  
Yeah, maybe!

GORDY  
Alright then, go ahead inside, talk  
to Frank, he'll show you around.

Franks turns around to leave, but still talking to Ryan  
aloud.

GORDY  
And don't worry, the ghosts still  
roam here despite the bad stucco  
job!

Ryan smiles and gives a nod that seems to say "Why am I  
here, again?" He opens his trunk and grabs his bags.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR - EVENING

Ryan is following a man, FRANK, while he is talking about  
things in the house.

FRANK  
...now it makes me sad every time I  
say it, but all this area has been  
replaced because of the hurricane  
many years ago. Biggest oak on the  
lot came right through. But don't  
worry, the ghosts can't tell the  
difference!

RYAN  
Yeah, the groundskeeper mentioned  
that.

FRANK  
Sure, sure. Anywho, that's pretty  
much the tour. You'll probably get  
more around of it walking the  
grounds on your own. After  
nightfall, that's when you just  
might get some unexpected visitors.

RYAN  
If most people come here for the  
ghosts, are they really unexpected?

Ryan waits for the joke to resolve, but it doesn't. The man  
nods and smiles, reaches in his pocket, then holds a room  
key out in front of him.

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FRANK  
Your room is the last one down the hall.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR ROOM - NIGHT

RYAN sits at a desk with his feet propped up, looking out the window. He grabs his tape recorder, presses record.

RYAN  
Apparently most of this home has been remodeled, so it's about as inspiring as hanging out at the mall.

He presses stop, and continues to look out the window. A figure walks past the window in the distance. They have a blanket over their head, like a hood, and wrapped it over themselves. The figure turns and looks at Ryan. It is simply a girl. Ryan raises up a hand to wave - she warmly smiles back. She continues on her way.

There is a knock on the door.

FRANK  
Mr. Houston?

RYAN  
Yeah, it's open.

Frank opens the door.

FRANK  
Sorry to bother you Mr. Houston,  
but it's 8 p.m. now, and just  
wanted to know if you had any needs  
before we turn in.

RYAN  
No, everything's fine.

FRANK  
That's good to here, good to hear.  
We ask all guests to remain in the room for safety, you know, in case anything supernatural occurs.

RYAN  
(skeptical)  
Oh, sure.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Also, before your week here is up,  
I thought you may want to stop by  
our little gift shop, we just got  
some Myrtle Grove keychains that I  
think are just going to fly off the  
shelves. They got these little  
lights on them...

FRANK reaches for his keys as he's talking, then starts  
shining the little LED light at Ryan. Ryan squints mildly at  
the bright light.

RYAN

Yeah, that's bright. I'll have to  
check that out.

FRANK

Ok, good night, ya here?

FRANK walks away from the door, leaving it half opened.

RYAN

(To Frank)

You didn't!... close the door.

Ryan "un-props" his feet, puts down his recorder, then turns  
around to the door. The woman from outside is in the  
doorway.

MADELINE

Hi, just came by to close your  
door, and say hello. I'm Madeline.

RYAN

Ryan - Ryan Houston.

Ryan smiles at her, enjoying her presence.

MADELINE

I have to apologize for my father.  
He can be pushy when it comes to  
merchandise.

RYAN

Its no big deal, really.

MADELINE

Is everything to your liking?

Ryan nods and smiles.

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RYAN  
Yeah, it is.

MADELINE  
Well, good night. It was nice to  
meet you, Ryan.

RYAN  
Likewise.

Madeline closes the door.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR ROOM - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT. Ryan is lying in bed. There is a scratch on the window that wakes him up. He hears footsteps fade. He gets up from his bed and walks to the window. Nothing outside. Suddenly, he hears chains drop to the floor from down the hallway. He walks to the door, almost put his hand on the handle, then pulls away. Instead, he grabs his tape recorder, and records as he gets back into bed.

RYAN  
Some strange sounds on the first  
night here.

The chains drop again.

RYAN  
I'll stay in the room as suggested  
to see where this goes.

The chains drop again, the again and cuts to black.

EXT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR GROUNDS - DAY

Ryan is sitting outside in the sun, wearing sunglasses.  
Gordy walks by hauling some grounds equipment.

GORDY  
So you made it through the night!

RYAN  
Yeah, despite all the noise. Was  
that you doing all the groundwork  
at night?

GORDY  
No, that wasn't me Mr. Houston.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN  
(sarcasm)  
Aah of course it wasn't.

GORDY  
Most people leave after the first night.

RYAN  
(pulls his shades down while speaking)  
That's probably because it's 300 dollars a night.

Gordy looks at Ryan, somewhat upset.

RYAN  
Aah, sorry Gordy, but those damn "ghosts", as you call them, kept me up half the night.

GORDY  
It seems they are working extra hard to inspire you, then.

RYAN  
I wish they'd simply resort to helpful tips and positive reinforcement.

GORDY  
Perhaps, sir, perhaps. You take care now.

RYAN  
Yep.

RYAN leans back, reenergizing in the sunlight.

EXT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan is back in his room, actually writing by hand and getting some work done. There is a knock at the door. Ryan, furiously working, doesn't even look up.

RYAN  
I'm good Frank, I'm busy.

MADELINE  
Sorry!

Ryan, upon hearing Madeline's voice, stops working.

RYAN  
Wait!

Ryan gets up from the table and opens the door. Madeline is there with her blanket drapped around her.

RYAN  
I'm sorry, I just didn't want to talk to your Dad - not that he's annoying or anything - Not annoying, I like your dad, I mean... Wait - Let me start over.

Madeline smiles and nods.

MADELINE  
Okay.

RYAN  
I could use a break. I've been writing for hours. Fresh air sounds good. Want to join me?

Madeline smiles and nods. Cut away.

EXT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR GROUNDS - NIGHT

Ryan and Madeline are sitting on a bench in the moonlight surround by old trees and fireflies.

MADELINE  
My father inherited this place about 20 years ago when my great-grandfather passed away. My grandfather refused to have anything to do with it, so my father was glad to have it with me on the way. I've been here all my life. I love it here.

RYAN  
It's very nice. Do you work here?

MADELINE  
Not so much anymore. We had a disagreement a while back, but I still live here though.

RYAN  
You don't get along with him?

MADELINE

It hasn't been the same since. I  
don't really like to talk about it.

RYAN

Just you and your father live here?

MADELINE

And Gordy. My father had to drop  
most of the staff when business  
slowed down. What brings you here?

RYAN

I'm a writer, and my brother paid  
for a week here, hoping to inspire  
me somehow. I believe the hype, no  
offense. Let me ask you: You  
believe this place is haunted?

Madeline smiles, as if to hold something back.

MADELINE

Off the record, right? I'm not  
going to see this quoted in a book  
later, am I?

RYAN

It's okay, I write fiction.

MADELINE

Ah, in that case - no. (she laughs  
to herself) My dad and I would make  
it fun for the people staying here  
by doing things - making noises -  
around midnight, basically so they  
have stories to tell after they  
went home.

RYAN

Aw, that sounds sweet when you put  
it that way.

MADELINE

But when I was little, my dad told  
me how he used to talk to the  
ghosts here. I think those were  
just tales, cause I could remember,  
when we had a staff, it would be  
like we were putting on a play for  
the guests after they went to bed.  
We all had parts and costumes, and  
it was fun, but I really cherish  
the times when it was just me and

(MORE)

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MADELINE (cont'd)  
my dad. (beat) I know, such a  
strange childhood.

RYAN  
I find it facinating. So were you  
keeping me up last night with the  
chains and the scratching?

MADELINE  
No, I'm sure that was my dad  
though. You're the first guest in a  
month. I think he's really trying  
to be a part of your novel.

RYAN  
I can't blame him for trying.  
Though, it is kind of disappointing  
to learn its all set up.

MADELINE  
I thought you didn't believe it to  
begin with.

RYAN  
I didn't, but I wanted to. At  
least, some part of me wanted to.  
Wouldn't it be great to be at a  
place where ghosts really did  
exist?

MADELINE  
What would you say to a ghost?

RYAN  
I don't know, (thinking) something  
like, (beat) how did you die?

MADELINE  
That's a morbid way to approach it.  
(beat) If you ever do meet a ghost,  
Ryan, which you will I'm sure (as a  
joke), the question is: (serious)  
How did you live?

Ryan nods in agreement.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan is lying in bed. The chains and scratching begin again. Ryan giggles to himself, thinking back on his conversation with Madeline. He gets out of bed, opens the door. When the door opens, footsteps begins to move away from the hallway.

RYAN

(shouting down the hall)

Frank, come on man, enough with the chains. It's late!

No response. Ryan begins to walk down the hall.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR - NIGHT

RYAN

Frank, the beans have been spilled, I talked to Madeline.

When Ryan says the name, chains fall to the floor, and from the darkness, a voice as small as a mouse speaks up. Frank emerges from a dark corner. He is freaked out completely.

FRANK

Who did you talk to?

RYAN

Your daughter, she told me everything, and it's okay, I'm not going to write about it. Just stop with the noise already, I'm your only guest right now.

FRANK

How?

RYAN

What?

FRANK

How, Ryan? How did you talk to Madeline?

RYAN

I met her yesterday, and we talked a little while ago. What's wrong with you?

Frank lights a flashlight at Ryan. Ryan covers his eyes. Frank then turns toward the wall where a case is.

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FRANK

I don't know what sort of prank  
you're pulling, Mr. Houston, but my  
daughter died in the hurricane.

Ryan's face slowly goes from confidence to confusion. In the case is a picture, a poem, and a blanket (the same blanket Madeline used before).

FRANK

I assure you - you didn't talk to  
my daughter. The tree that crushed  
half of this house made sure of it.  
Now you go back in your goddamn  
room, you pack up, and leave in the  
morning. I'll refund your brother  
every last penny.

RYAN

Frank, please, I'm not lying to  
you...

FRANK

(choosing his words carefully,  
he speaks through his teeth)

Shut up! You know, the thing is, I  
know you're not lying to me. I know  
what this place can do. I'm upset  
because I haven't talked to my  
daughter since we argued about  
evacuating this house before that  
hurricane. (shouting) So why is she  
talking to you, and not me?! Why  
does she ignore me!? Why....

Frank throws the chains at the wall as he shouts. He collapses to the floor and sobs as Ryan backs away.

INT. MYRTLE GROVE MANOR ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan enters the room, really freaked out by what he just heard. His eyes are large as he runs this through his mind. The camera stays on him as he turns on the light and looks up as if to see someone.

RYAN

How... did you live?

CREDITS.